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NSC BRIEFING

9 May 1960

SOVIET TACTICS IN EXPLOITING 1 MAY AIRCRAFT INCIDENT

- I. Khrushchev has taken advantage of the aircraft incident on 1 May to heat up the international atmosphere--a familiar Soviet tactic on the eve of important negotiations. The idea is to put the Western powers on the defensive and give a sense of urgency to the negotiations.
- A. His threat to bring the issue before the UN Security Council closely parallels a Soviet move calling an emergency session in April 1958 to condemn alleged flights of US bombers over the Arctic.
1. This effort coincided with the beginning of the abortive preparatory talks in Moscow to arrange a pre-summit foreign ministers' conference.
- B. A similar maneuver to strengthen the Soviet negotiating position and wring last-minute concessions from the West was employed in June 1958, shortly before the Geneva technical conference on detecting nuclear tests.
1. Five days before the opening Moscow dispatched a note containing an implied threat to boycott the talks, and charging that US failure to agree that the talks "must result" in a test ban was "dooming the conference to failure beforehand."
- C. Khrushchev's attempt in his recent Supreme Soviet speeches to demonstrate that his policy of peaceful coexistence does not result from any weakness is reminiscent of Marshal Zhukov's speech on the eve of the 1957 UN Disarmament Committee negotiations.

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1. Just as Khrushchev boasted of the effectiveness of Soviet missiles, Zhukov proclaimed that atomic weapons would be "inevitably put into service in the event of a big conflict."
  2. At that time Moscow followed up Zhukov's speech with a series of notes reviving charges that the US was preparing for atomic war and warning American allies of the dangers they were exposing themselves to by military cooperation with the US. A Soviet Foreign Ministry statement specifically warned Bonn and London of the dangers of atomic retaliation.
- D. More recently, when the Geneva Foreign Ministers' talks began last May Khrushchev delivered a speech in Kiev boasting that the USSR had "good rockets in the required number" and predicting that although the USSR would sustain serious damage in event of war the Western powers would be threatened with "inevitable catastrophe."
1. In a similar vein, when the foreign ministers reconvened after Secretary Dulles' funeral, Khrushchev delivered a speech in Albania sharply rejecting US proposals and heaping criticism on what he termed Western insincerity in the talks.
- II. Khrushchev probably hopes by discrediting US leadership within the Western alliance, to increase pressures for US concessions as a sign of American intention to negotiate seriously at the summit.
- A. At the same time, his tough talk will serve to placate the Chinese Communists, who disapprove strongly of any soft approach to the West.

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III. Despite heavy exploitation of the plane incident, Khrushchev has been careful not to block his path to the summit or upset the plans for the President's visit to the USSR.

A. In both speeches he avoided attributing to the President any personal responsibility for the incident and reaffirmed his intention to "spare no effort" to reach agreement at the summit.

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